While researching poision ivy (and other Toxicodendron allergic contact dermatitis) treatment, I came across an unusual source of systemic Toxicodendron (Rhus) exposure -- Rhus Chicken. This is a traditional Korean chicken dish that uses a Toxicodendron plant preparation as a medicinal meal, typically for loose stool, bloating, IBD and other GI complaints. Rather than focal rash, however, patients can develop systemic contact dermatitis  (SCD).

This retrospective study examined 30 patients with SCD. 21 were treated as inpatients, and all responded to systemic corticosteroids and antihistamines within 7-10 days. The rash appeared most commonly as a generalized erythematous maculopapular eruption, followed by erythroderma and erythema multiforme. These patients also exhibited leukocytosis, neutrophilia and several had elevated LFTs. No significant complications were reported.

Ten of the 30 patients had a known allergy to Rhus but this did not predict severity. Many of the others denied previous exposure or sensitization to Rhus, which is usually required for a reaction. The authors explained this was likely due to the prevalence of Rhus lacquer furniture in Korea which can be allergenic for hundreds of years.

In short – another food to look out for!

